

Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
www.iowadnr.gov

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STATE PARKS FILLING FOR MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND

DES MOINES – The first holiday of the camping season begins Friday and campgrounds across the state will be filling to capacity with campers eager to get back to nature with family and friends. All reservable campsites with electricity in Iowa state parks have been snapped up for months leaving campers without a reservation to make plans to arrive early if they want electricity at their campsite.

Memorial Day Weekend will be busy and for many campers, it will be the first outing of the year. Before pulling out of the driveway, campers should go through their equipment to make sure it is in usable condition and check the camping supplies so nothing is forgotten. Make sure to pack a can opener and aluminum foil. Don't forget the sunscreen and bug repellent.

Campers are encouraged to get their firewood from local sources and to definitely not bring firewood from out of state. Parks staff will be discouraging campers from burning anything in a fire ring other than wood, and that includes scrap lumber. Parks workers have cleaned out all kinds of trash, melted plastic, plywood scraps, empty cans, lawn chairs, and old pieces of metal from fire rings, which, when burned, releases pollutants into the air and leaves unwanted debris in the fire ring.

It is also a good time to review the rules of the park. Don't bring fireworks, obey

quiet hours and be a good neighbor.

“Everyone is out to have a good time and it only takes one loud, disrespectful campsite to disrupt an entire campground,” said Jim Lawson, supervisor for state parks in south central Iowa. “This will be a busy weekend so campers should have patience and arrive early to set up on their site.”

Campers who do not have a reservation should call ahead to see if the park has any remaining campsites. Most electrical campsites that are first come, first serve will be filling by midweek.

“Campers looking for a campsite this late in the game should have a back up plan if the park is full. Look at different parks a little further away or ask the park staff what they would recommend,” said Greg Van Fosson, supervisor for state parks in north central Iowa.

A listing of Iowa State Parks with information on each park and contacts is available online at www.iowadnr.gov then click on State Parks in the navigation column on the left.

For more information, contact Mick Klemesrud at 515-281-8653.

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FISHING HITTING ITS PEAK AS MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND NEARS

Good weather forecasted for the Memorial Day Weekend should provide excellent fishing across the state.

Fishing in the spring is often some of the best for the entire year and Memorial Day Weekend is right in the heart of it. Water temperature allows for fish to be active during the entire day, and many fish are in spawning mode, which usually means they are close to shore and willing to bite. Those two factors also make spring a good time to take children fishing.

“For the most part, our lakes are in really good shape and fishing should be really good for Memorial Day Weekend and for the next few weeks,” said Marion Conover, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Bureau. “Our campers should bring their fishing rods and enjoy some excellent fishing during the holiday in the park.”

In many lakes, bluegills and crappies will be close to shore and aggressive. Conover said anglers can improve their success by using small hooks, bobbers about the

size of a quarter and 4-pound test strength line. For crappies, bring a selection of 1/16 to 1/32-ounce jigs, and tip the jig either with a jig body or a small minnow. For bluegills, use the same size jigs and tip it with a small piece of night crawler.

“All of our lakes have panfish in them,” Conover said. “Look for any type of structure in the water, like rocks or a pile of brush or gravel. Those would be good places to fish for bluegills or crappies. Bass will be around brush or boat docks or rock piles.”

With gas prices reaching new record highs seemingly every other day, it is nice that Iowa lakes, streams and ponds are not far from any town. There is a good place to fish within 30 miles from about any town in the state.

“We have a lot of good fishing opportunities close to home and for anglers who only fish out of state, I would like to invite them to give Iowa fishing a try. We have some excellent fishing right here and they don’t have to drive hours to find it,” he said.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources issues a weekly fishing report each Thursday afternoon at www.iowadnr.gov, then click on fishing report in the left column. The website also has places to fish, lake maps and other information to help with success.

For more information, contact Conover at 515-281-5208.

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[electronic photo available]

BIRDERS SEARCH FOR RARE WATERFOWL NEST

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

CLEAR LAKE---There’s a new duck in town. Somewhere along Clear Lake’s north shore a tiny bufflehead duck is currently tucked deep inside a natural tree cavity quietly incubating her clutch of eggs. At least that’s what a number of Iowa birding enthusiasts have been led to believe.

The saga began in late April when DNR State Waterfowl Biologist, Guy Zenner, noticed a pair of buffleheads feeding with a flock of coots along the lake’s high bank located just west of the Clear Lake Golf Course. Although bufflehead ducks are a common spring migrant in Iowa, most have moved on by mid-April.

“At first, I just thought the birds found a good place to feed,” said Zenner. “But when I noticed the birds in the exact same spot several days later, I began to take notice. To me, it was surprising that the birds were so site specific. They seemed tied to a specific location and were acting just like a pair of birds on their nesting territory.”

Returning to Clear Lake following a week long, statewide spring waterfowl

survey, Zenner noticed the bufflehead drake sitting alone in the same spot the pair had occupied for several days.

“That’s when I realized that the hen must be nesting,” said Zenner. “Like wood ducks, buffleheads are cavity nesters and, if she was on eggs, I knew the hen must be nearby.”

Zenner alerted area birders, and the hunt was on. So far, no one has been successful in locating the duck’s nest site.

“If no one can spot the hen going to or from her nest, our last hope is document her brood when she brings it to the lake,” Zenner. For a little duck, the birds are generating a lot of local excitement.”

If documented, this will only be the third bufflehead duck nest ever recorded in Iowa. The species is most abundant in the western boreal forests of British Columbia and Alaska where the birds nest in abandoned flicker nests.

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STATE HIGH SCHOOL TRAPSHOOT

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

All along the nearly mile-long range, competitors toed the line. This was the state tournament, the culmination of more than two months of in-season competition. The 2008 Iowa High School State Trap Championships, brought together more than 340 young competitors, representing their schools and the hours of practice they had poured into their preparation.

“There’s a lot more pressure. It’s just a lot harder to concentrate. You do the best you can,” observed Mount Vernon freshman Trid Kleiber, of the state meet atmosphere. Not enough pressure, though, that he couldn’t break all 25 clay targets in his afternoon round. Klieber and his teammates were typical of the squads assembled at the State Trapshooting range, north of Cedar Falls, May 17. “We started last year. We have 13 kids on the team; nine are here today,” said Mount Vernon coach Tom Wilkinson. “It’s an opportunity for them to do something different than other school activities.”

Competitors have 25 shots at 16 yards; then step back a few feet for their ‘handicap’ round. Team and individual scores are kept; as they vie for the championship. “This is *the* high school event. Most of these teams are recognized by their high schools,” explained Ron Underwood, president of the Iowa High School Clay Target Association. “This is an evolving sport...one of the safest high school sports out there.”

Much like a track meet or ball game, family and other fans watched from the sidelines. A couple vendors sold snacks and sandwiches through the day-long event.

For the third consecutive year, Mason City High School took home the team crown. Its team of Kaleb Roth, Blane Sjostrand, Zach Harris, Jake Humburg and Eli Francis shattered 231 of its combined 250 clay targets. “You just have to stay focused and not get frustrated,” explained Humburg, of a shooter’s preparation on the line. “If you get frustrated, it doesn’t really help you any.” South Winneshiek’s Noland Hageman won a shoot off with Mason City’s Roth (each broke 48 of 50 in regulation) for the individual boys title. Chandal Granquist of Linn Mar High School (47 of 50) was the girls individual champion.

Teams or individuals from 30 high schools, plus one home schooled participant, competed. School programs range from brand new to well-established. Mason City, for instance, had 41 participants. “This sport fills a niche for students in our high school who otherwise may not have an opportunity to compete in athletic and extracurricular activities,” stressed Dan Ramaeker, teacher and head trapshooting coach at Mason City. “It really hooks kids into the school and the community. It also gives kids an incentive to be in class and keep their grades up.”

Team Standings: 2008 Iowa High School Trap Championships

1st Place Team: Mason City Red: 231x250

Kaleb Roth, Blane Sjostrand, Zach Harris, Jake Humburg, Eli Francis

2nd Place Team: Maquoketa #1: 224x250

Justin Fey, Zach Scheibe, Jake Clark, Forest Simonin, Jake Kirk

3rd Place Team: Charles City Black: 219x250 (shoot-off winner)

Seth Uetz, Austin Hicks, Neil Wenthe, Seth Stough, Matt Manning

4th Place Team: South Winneshiek 1: 219x250

Cody Imoehl, Zach Kolaas, Nolan Hageman, Johanna, Hogenson, Robert Riehle

5th Place Team: Mason City Black: 217x250

Greg Shurtz, Scott Peters, Mike Christopherson, Gabe McGee, Ethan Hubbard

6th Place Team: Ackley Geneva Wellsburg Steamboat Rock (AGWSR): 215x250

Mitch Hirth, Brett Lage, Brad Heinrich, Josh Olsen, Mason Lindaman

Individual Girls:

1st : Chandal Granquist (Linn-Mar High School) 47x50

2nd: Samantha Herman (Osage) 46x50

3rd: Beth Wygle (New Hampton) 44x50 (shoot-off winner)

4th: Nicole Streets (Mason City) 44x50

5th: Calleen Anderson (Ogden) 43x50

6th: Amber Sudbrock (West Central Valley HS) 42x50

Individual Boys:

1st: Nolan Hageman (South Winneshiek) 48x50 (shoot-off winner)

2nd: Kaleb Roth (Mason City) 48x50 (shoot-off RU)

3rd: Jake Humburg (Mason City) 48x50
4th: Josh Olson (AGWSR) 48x50
5th: Seth Uetz (Charles City) 48x50
6th: Taylor Bryant (Charles City) 48x50

Scholastic Clay Target Program Results

In addition to the high school championships, the Scholastic Clay Target Program state meet was also held May 17 in Cedar Falls. Competitive categories in the SCTP are based on age and experience level. “This program provides a platform to get clay target shooting programs started at the local level,” explained Ben Berka, Shooting Sports Coordinator for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). “Statistics prove they are much safer than every other popular sport in school...and many schools endorse the program as a school activity. Many offer varsity letters, provide transportation and offer some financial assistance.”

The DNR also sponsored the Iowa Cup awards, based on cumulative trap season totals those from the two state championship events. The 2008 winners—and captains of the girls and boys all state trap teams are Calleen Anderson of Ogden (408 of 450) and Zach Scheibe of Maquoketa (430 of 450). Championship events were co-hosted by the DNR, the Iowa High School Clay Target Association, the Iowa Scholastic Clay Target Program Inc., Iowa State Trapshooting Association and the New Pioneer Club. Brownell’s of Montezuma is also recognized as a platinum sponsor.

For more information about the high school and Scholastic Clay Target Program, contact Ben Berka at Ben.Berka@dnr.iowa.gov or 515-281-5918. The DNR offers a basic shotgun coach certification course. The course is free to school teachers and \$30 for other volunteer coaches.

Editors Note: The following schools were represented at the 2008 Trap Shoot championships:

Teams: Ackley-Geneva Wellsburg-Steamboat Rock, Anamosa, Charles City, Clear Creek-Amana, Guthrie Center, Indianola, Lynnvill-Sully, Maquoketa, Mason City, Mount Vernon, Nashua-Plainfield, New Hampton, Northwood-Kensett, Ogden, Osage, Oskaloosa, Panorama, Pella, Roland-Story, South Winneshiek, St. Ansgar, Tri-Center, Union, Waukee, Waterloo West,

Individuals: Ankeny, Coon Rapids-Bayard, Linn-Mar, West Central Valley, Williamsburg

Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP) Results:

Intermediate, Entry Level Division

1st: Big Springs 2 (Searsboro) 676x1000

Kyle Terlouw, Bryanna Steele, Eric Osborn, Whitney Bair, Matt Kriegel

2nd: Oskalossa Middle School 1 664x1000 (shoot-off winner)

Nic DeJong, Brandon Sage, Stephen Shannon, Branden Strasser, Clay Monoit

3rd: Big Springs 1 (Searsboro) 664x1000

Noah Brennan, Zack Price, Cody Schwarck, Garret Van Mannen, Mitchell Frischmeyer

Intermediate, Advanced Division

1st: Des Moines Area Clay Crushers 1 (Waukee) 758x1000

Will Thomas, Sam Mraz, Brooke Vogel, Matt Delanoit, Logan Lyon

2nd: AGWSR Intermediate 1 729x1000

Zach Eiderts, Carson Lutterman, Cody Meyer, Kollin Deberg, Zach Lindaman

Senior Division, Junior Varsity

1st: Panorama 826x1000

Ethan Sparks, Logan Christofferson, Sklar Meinecke, Cameron Hester, Brandon Harper

2nd: Brooklyn BGM #1 821x1000

Colton Hall, Joe Clayton, Jared Kriegel, Neal Kriegel, Shane Deimerly

3rd: Lynville-Sully 811x1000

Nick Arthur, Zack McNaul, Nick Rozendaal, Jake DePenning, Nick Beyer

Senior Division, Varsity

1st: Nashua #2 889x1000

Jordan Feltz, Tyler Hanawalt, Taylor Bryant, Suzanne Kueter, Seth Stough

2nd: Roland Story Red 880x1000

Brylee Anderson, Mark Gookin, Matt Youngman, Josh Conrad, Sawyer Hjortsvang

3rd: Northwood A 874x1000

Ryan Mueller, Aaron Hill, Brian Sime, Justin Peerson, Jacob Springer

Individual Girls:

1st: Chandal Granquist (Linn-Mar High School) 178x200

2nd: Calleen Anderson (Ogden) 177x200

3rd: Suzanne Kueter (Nashua) 176x200

4th: Erika Van Polen (Oskaloosa) 164x200

5th: Amber Sudbrock (West Central Valley HS) 160x200

6th: Brooke Vogel (Brody Middle School, Des Moines) 154x200

Individual Boys:

1st: Nick Arthur (Lynville-Sully) 192x200
2nd: Taylor Bryant (Nashua) 190x200
3rd: Zach Scheibe (Maquoketa) 189x200
4th: Seth Utez (Nashua) 188x200 (shoot-off winner)
5th: Sam Hill (Union HS) 188x200
6th: Cord Anderson (Ogden) 188x200

Iowa Department of Natural Resources ‘Iowa Cup’ Trophies

Girl: Calleen Anderson (Ogden) 408x450

Boy: Zach Scheibe (Maquoketa) 430x450

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PRAIRIE ROSE LAKE FOCUS OF MAY 28 PUBLIC MEETING

The results of an in-depth study on Prairie Rose Lake will be unveiled at a public meeting on May 28, at the First Baptist Church, in Harlan. Registration begins at 6:30 p.m. with the public meeting following at 7 p.m.

Dr. John Downing, with the Iowa State University Limnology Department, will present the results of the diagnostic feasibility study that will identify what needs to be done to improve the lake’s water quality. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources area fisheries biologist Bryan Hayes will discuss the status of the fishery in Prairie Rose and what options are available to improve it. A watershed council will be assembled from citizens interested in assisting the development of a lake restoration plan.

“There are a lot of rumors going around about Prairie Rose and we want people to come to the meeting and hear what the issues are with the lake, and what we are proposing to do about it and when,” Hayes said.

Prairie Rose has poor water quality and is not currently supporting a productive fishery. Hayes said a creel study in 2007 found low use during the summer primarily because the lake has a poor quality bluegill and crappie population. Hayes said Prairie Rose currently has a largemouth bass population that is about one-third of where it should be and it has carp which contribute to water quality problems.

“The lake is just not attracting many anglers. We need to start in the watershed first, then look at the in lake habitat and fishery to get this lake turned around,” Hayes said. “We would like to add it to our success stories, like Lake Anita and Lake of Three Fires.”

The focus of the work will be to improve the water quality, which will lead to

improvements in the fishery. Once the water quality and fishery improve, the value and use of the park will increase. "We have 200 acres of public water that is not living up to its potential," Hayes said.

The meeting is co-sponsored by the Shelby County Soil and Water Conservation District, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Division of Soil Conservation and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

For more information, contact Hayes at 712-769-2587.

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FISH BY THE MILLIONS RELEASED IN IOWA WATERS

Iowa Department of Natural Resources fisheries crews recently stocked millions of northern pike and walleye in Iowa lakes and rivers, but anglers will have to wait for a few years before these fish will be caught.

An estimated 140 million newly hatched walleye fry were stocked in public lakes and rivers across the state. Hatcheries at Spirit Lake and Lake Rathbun will stock tens of thousands more after they are grown to 2 to 3-inch fingerling sized fish.

A final stocking of walleyes will go out in the fall, when the fish are around 6 to 8 inches. These larger fish have a much higher survival rate than the fry, but also are much more expensive to rear.

Northern pike were also released by the millions into Iowa waters. More than 3 million pike fry were released in lakes and rivers in April, then another 265,000 2 to 3-inch pike were stocked in May.

The young fish were hatched from those collected during April by crews from Spirit Lake, Storm Lake, Clear Lake, Lake Rathbun, Fairport and Guttenberg. Iowa walleye and northern pike have little natural reproduction and their populations are maintained by the stocking fry and fingerling sized fish that have been hatched from locally collected adults.

Additionally, the DNR stocked 1 million wiper fry in Saylorville Lake and will stock thousands of fingerling sized wipers later this year.

For more information, contact Mike Mason, supervisor of fish hatcheries for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, at 515-281-6072.

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ANNUAL WILDLIFE BABY SEASON HAS BEGUN

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

The annual wildlife baby season has begun.

I saw my first proof of the occasion late last week. I had just pulled onto a blacktop roadway that parallels the edge of a marsh when a hen mallard stepped from the ditch. As I slowed to observe, 11 tiny ducklings suddenly scrambled out of the thick grass to join their mother.

Making sure no one was behind me, I came to a stop. The only car coming from the opposite direction did the same. The vehicle was driven by a woman who I'd guess to be in her 70s. With our cars parked less than 15 yards apart, we both paused to observe as the proud hen mallard paraded her row of tiny duplicates between us, across the blacktop, and into the adjacent marsh.

Glancing back to the lady, I quickly assessed that she was as highly thrilled by the development as I was. So much so, in fact, that it was hard to determine which show was best --- her or the ducks.

With the mallard family safely in the cattails, we continued our journeys. As our cars passed, the woman looked my way. She was still grinning from ear to ear while gleefully waving both hands above the steering wheel. That heart warming experience made a great beginning to my day.

That's how all wildlife baby encounters are supposed to end: wildlife families intact and in their natural habitat. Human observers inspired by the encounter.

Unfortunately, many scenarios have a far less happy ending. Whenever people encounter a newborn fawn, nest of baby cottontails, or fledgling baby bird, they often assume that the animals are orphaned and in need of immediate human intervention. The fate of these hapless youngsters is forever sealed as they are promptly "rescued from the wild."

In most cases, these wildlife babies perish soon after capture. Should an animal survive the initial trauma of being captured and confined, it often succumbs more slowly to pneumonia, other diseases, or malnutrition.

Whether they're adults or young, all species of wildlife have highly specific needs for survival. "Rescuing a baby from its mother" not only shows bad judgment -- it is also illegal. Wild mammals are protected by state law. Wild birds are protected by both state and federal law. Illegally capturing and possessing wildlife can lead to serious penalty.

Observing native birds and mammals in their natural habitat is a unique privilege. Making field notes or obtaining a good photo or two provides an even more lasting memory. But once you've done that, leave wildlife babies where they belong ---- in the wild.

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DRY WEATHER SENDS RIDERS TO ATV PARKS

Warm, dry weather is a welcome sight to Iowa's All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) and Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) park users. The parks are drying out and opening for business which is attracting riders, including riders from outside of Iowa.

All ATVs and dirt bikes must be registered in order to ride in Iowa's eight ATV/OHV parks, including those from out of state. Nonresidents are required to purchase a user permit and will need to provide the VIN number on the machine and the make and model to register ATV.

A permit may be purchased from any hunting and fishing license retail sales agent and costs \$16.50, and costs \$16.75 from the county recorders. The user permit must be attached to the rear of the ATV so that it is clearly visible.

The permit is valid until Dec. 31.

Iowa has eight All-Terrain Vehicle and Off-Highway Motorcycle Riding Areas around the state. For the latest information, go to <http://www.iowadnr.com/law/atv/index.html>

For more information, contact Rhonda Fowler, with the DNR's snowmobile and OHV program, at 515-281-3208.

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